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Message Text

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42
ORIGIN EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ITFE-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 DHA-02 ORM-01 IO-10

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DRAFTED BY EA/LC:BSKIRKPATRICK:DTM
APPROVED BY IATF:JVTAFT
EA/LC:JDROSENTHAL
IATF:AFANTIPPAS
DOD/ISA - COL CHING (INFO)
EA/P:MSMITH (SUBS)
---------- 123554
R 060108Z SEP 75
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 212312

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, MOPS, PINT, CB, TH

SUBJECT: MAYAGUEZ INCIDENT: CAMBODIAN NAVAL HIGHJACKERS MUTINY AND FLEE TO THAILAND

REFS: A. BANGKOK 8993; B. STATE 118305; C. BANGKOK 9291

1. WASHINGTON STAR SEPTEMBER 4 CARRIED INTERVIEW WITH MAYAGUEZ CAPTAIN CHARLES MILLER. HE REFERRED TO INCIDENT DISCUSSED REFTELS AS FOLLOWS.

BEGIN QUOTE

Q: SHORTLY AFTER THE RELEASE OF YOUR SHIP, A CAMBODIAN GUN-BOAT AND CREW SHOWED UP AND ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAD BEEN THE GUNBOAT THAT HAD SEIZED YOUR SHIP. WAS THAT THE GUNBOAT THAT STOPPED YOU?
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A: NO. I THINK THIS GUNBOAT DEFECTED THE DAY PRIOR TO THE SEIZURE OF THE MAYAGUEZ. IT WAS A LITTLE LARGER THAN THE GUNBOAT THAT SEIZED ME. WHEN THE LON NOL GOVERNMENT FELL AND THE KHMER ROUGE TOOK OVER THEY DIDN'T HAVE ENOUGH EX-

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PERIENCED MEN TO OPERATE THESE GUNBOATS SO THE LON NOL SAILORS THAT WERE ON THE GUNBOATS REMAINED ON THE SHIPS. THEY PUT ONE KHMER ROUGE MAN ON AS THE CAPTAIN. WELL, THIS

GUNBOAT HAD STOPPED ONE SHIP AND THEY FIGURED IT WAS THE MAYAGUEZ. NONE OF THEM COULD READ ENGLISH. THEY SHOT THE KHMER ROUGE CAPTAIN ON THE SHIP AND WENT TO SEA AND HEADED FOR SATTAHIP (THAILAND). THEY WERE ARRESTED, THE GUNBOAT WAS SEIZED, THE THAI GOVERNMENT PAINTED OUT THE P-311 ON THE BOW RIGHT AWAY, AND THEY PUT 10 LON NOL SAILORS IN THE NAVY PRISON.

Q: HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

A: AFTER THE RELEASE OF THE MAYAGUEZ, I WENT INTO SATTA-HIP. A TAXI DRIVER POINTED OUT THE GUNBOAT AND SAID THEY HAD THE SAILORS IN PRISON, AND WOULD I LIKE TO SEE THEM? SO I WENT IN AND THEY LET US INTO THE PRISON. THEY WEREN'T LOCKED UP IN CELLS, THEY WERE IN ONE BIG ROOM WITH MAYBE 20 OR 30 BUNKS IN IT. A FEW OF THEM SPOKE A FEW WORDS OF ENGLISH, AND I TALKED TO THEM, AND THEY TOLD ME THEY WOULD LIKE TO BE REFUGEES AND TAKEN INTO THE UNITED STATES. THE THAI GOVERNMENT WAS NEGOTIATING WITH THE CAM-BODIAN GOVERNMENT TO RETURN THE BOAT AND THE SAILORS. WELL I KNEW THAT IF THEY WERE RETURNED TO CAMBODIA THEY WOULD ALL BE LINED UP AGAINST THE WALL, AND BEHEADED OR SHOT, BECAUSE THEY SHOT THE KHMER ROUGE SKIPPER. SO I TOLD THEM I WOULD DO THE BEST I POSSIBLY COULD. AND WHEN I WAS LEAVING, ONE YOUNG MAN ASKED ME IF I WOULD DELIVER A LETTER TO OUR STATE DEPARTMENT, AND I PROMISED HIM THAT I WOULD.

Q: TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT?

A: IT WAS ADDRESSED ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE ENVELOPE IN ENGLISH, WHEN I GOT BACK TO THE SHIP, I FIGURED WELL, I'D CONFIDENTIAL

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LIKE TO SEE WHAT'S IN THE LETTER. I'VE SEEN THAT HE WROTE ENGLISH ON THE OUTSIDE, ADDRESSED TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT. I OPENED THE LETTER AND FOUND OUT IT WAS WRITTEN IN THAI, OR IN CAMBODIAN. AND THEN I SENT A WIRE TO OUR SEALAND AGENT IN SINGAPORE THAT I HAD THIS LETTER, AND IF HE WOULD CONTACT THE EMBASSY AND THE COAST GUARD AND THE BRITISH EMBASSY I WOULD FURNISH A COPY. IT WAS SENT BY DISPATCH TO BANGKOK AND ON THE FOLLOWING TRIP WHEN I WENT BACK INTO SATTAHIP I WENT TO THE PRISON, AND THE NAVY PERSONNEL TOLD ME THAT THE THAI GOVERNMENT RELEASED THE MEN AND THEY WERE WALKING THE STREETS AS REFUGEES IN BANGKOK. THEY WERE NICE, CLEAN CUT YOUNG FELLOWS. THEY DID'NT WANT TO LOSE THEIR LIFE BECAUSE OF SOME RAG-TAG GOVERNMENT THAT WAS JUST STARTING UP THE COUNTRY. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO SEIZE

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ANY MORE SHIPS, OF ANY NATION.

END QUOTE.

2. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, LETTER MENTIONED ABOVE WAS NOT DELIVERED TO DEPARTMENT. WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS, INCLUDING SUGGESTIONS FOR RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES IN ADDITION TO DISCUSSIONS IN REFTELS B AND C. ROBINSON

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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